

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) A method of surgically coupling a soft tissue replacement into a first tunnel defined within a bone comprising:

inserting an insertion rod comprising a guide member into the first tunnel, wherein a flexible strand is pre-loaded in the form of a loop onto said guide member;

forming a second tunnel ~~transverse~~ traverse and through said first tunnel and said loop;

forming a third tunnel ~~transverse~~ traverse and through said first tunnel and said loop;

placing a soft tissue bearing member ~~through~~ within said second tunnel so as to ~~transverse~~ traverse said first tunnel; and

placing a removable flexible strand bearing element ~~through~~ within said third tunnel so as to ~~transverse~~ traverse said first tunnel.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, further comprising affixing said insertion rod to an external fixture such that said insertion rod is aligned with said external fixture.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the step of forming said second tunnel includes aligning a drill bit using said external fixture.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of forming said first tunnel in a first bone member.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of:

affixing a soft tissue to the soft tissue bearing ~~element~~ member in said first tunnel;

removing the flexible strand bearing element from the third tunnel;

pulling said soft tissue over said soft tissue bearing ~~element~~ member in said first tunnel and back out said first tunnel; and

affixing the soft tissue to a bone.

21. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein said step of forming said second tunnel comprises aligning a first tunnel forming device to form said second tunnel using said insertion rod.

22. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 20 further including pulling said soft tissue from said soft tissue bearing ~~element~~ member to said flexible strand bearing element.

23. (Original) The method of claim 20 further including injecting biological materials into the first tunnel.

24. (Original) The method according to claim 20 further including injecting biological materials through the third tunnel into the first tunnel.

25. (Original) The method according to claim 24 further including coupling a syringe to the third tunnel.

26. (Currently Amended) A method of surgically coupling a soft tissue replacement into a first tunnel defined within a bone comprising:

inserting a first portion of an insertion mechanism into the first tunnel, wherein a flexible strand is pre-loaded in the form of a loop onto said insertion mechanism;

forming a second tunnel generally perpendicular to and coupled to said first tunnel;

forming a third tunnel generally perpendicular to and coupled to said first tunnel;

placing a soft tissue bearing member ~~through~~ within said second tunnel after inserting the first portion of the insertion mechanism so as to at least partially ~~transverse~~ traverse said first tunnel; and

placing a flexible strand bearing element ~~through~~ within said third tunnel so as to at least partially ~~transverse~~ traverse said first tunnel,

wherein said flexible strand at least partially surrounds the flexible strand bearing element and the soft tissue bearing ~~element~~ member.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, further comprising affixing said insertion mechanism to an external fixture such that said insertion mechanism is aligned with said external fixture.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein forming said second tunnel includes aligning a drill bit using said external fixture.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, further comprising forming said first tunnel in a first bone member.

30. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, further comprising the steps of:

affixing a soft tissue replacement to a first end of said flexible strand; and
pulling said soft tissue to the soft tissue bearing ~~element~~ member into said first tunnel;

removing said flexible strand bearing element from the third tunnel;
pulling a portion of said soft tissue over said soft tissue bearing ~~element~~ member in said first tunnel and back out said first tunnel; and

affixing the soft tissue to a bone.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein said step of forming said second tunnel comprises aligning a second tunnel forming device with said insertion mechanism.

32. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 30 further including pulling said soft tissue from said soft tissue bearing ~~element~~ member to said flexible strand bearing element.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 further including injecting biological compatible materials into the first tunnel.

34. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 30 further including injecting biological materials through the third tunnel into the first tunnel.

35. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 34 wherein forming the second tunnel is forming a tunnel having a first diameter, and forming a third tunnel is forming a tunnel having a second diameter, wherein the second diameter is smaller than the first diameter.

36. (Currently Amended) A method of surgically coupling a soft tissue replacement into a first tunnel defined within a bone comprising:

inserting a first portion of an insertion mechanism into the first tunnel, wherein a flexible strand is pre-loaded onto said insertion mechanism;

placing a soft tissue bearing member into said first tunnel so as to at least partially ~~transverse~~ traverse said first tunnel;

placing a flexible strand bearing element into said first tunnel so as to at least partially ~~transverse~~ traverse said first tunnel; and

supporting the flexible strand on the flexible strand bearing element.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 36, further comprising affixing said insertion mechanism to an external fixture such that said insertion mechanism is aligned with said external fixture.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein placing a soft tissue bearing member into said first tunnel includes aligning the soft tissue bearing member using said external fixture.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 36, further comprising forming at least one tunnel perpendicular to said first tunnel in a first bone member and placing the soft tissue bearing member through the at least one tunnel.

40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 36, further comprising the steps of:

affixing a soft tissue replacement to a first end of said flexible strand; and

pulling said soft tissue to the soft tissue bearing ~~element~~member;

removing said flexible strand bearing element;

pulling a portion of said soft tissue over said soft tissue bearing ~~element~~
member;

affixing the soft tissue to the bone.